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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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BACK OF THE ROUND PURPLE MEAT INSPECTION STAMP

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The U. S. Department of Agriculture in 1948 inspected meat at approximately 500 slaughtering establishments and 440 meat processing plants which conducted no slaughtering. The number of animals inspected exceeded 86,500,000. More than 12,000,000,000 pounds of processed meat food products derived from these animals was inspected. This volume of operations exceeded that of 1947, which held the record up to that time.

The Department's inspection of meat dates back to 1890. Strangely enough, the primary urge for this service came from abroad. European buyers then looked with disfavor on meat exported from the United States, largely because it bore no official evidence that it came from healthy animals. Congress remedied this situation by providing a service that would make inspections and certify to foreign governments as to the health of animals and the wholesomeness of meats sent abroad.

Later, in response to public sentiment within the United States, Congress broadened the law to its present scope. The various meat inspection statutes, with the regulations under them, apply to slaughtering and meat processing establishments that prepare meat food products for interstate and foreign commerce. But the meat inspection law exempts farmers and to some extent retail butchers and dealers who make interstate shipments in serving their own customers. A meat business confined within a single state is not required to have Federal inspection of its products. As the system actually works out, about two-thirds of this country's meat supply receives U. S. inspection.

The Department employs a corps of veterinarians who are graduates of accredited colleges and specially trained lay inspectors and assigns them to plants in which the inspection is maintained. The number of inspectors assigned to each plant ranges from one to sixty, depending on the size of the establishment. Detailed regulations guide the inspectors in making their decisions.

The following pictures show the main steps in Federal meat inspection.



